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Solar Power on Your Home: Getting Started

1. Find a Solar Installer in Southern Arizona

Arizona Solar Energy Industries Association
<http://www.arizonasolarindustry.org/members.html>

Tucson Electric Power
<http://www.greenwatts.com/Docs/ListingSolarInstallers.pdf>

2. General Installation Procedures for Solar Electric Panels

- Call to schedule a site visit at your home. An installer will work with you to assess your energy needs and the unique circumstances. If you live in an area with a homeowner's association (HOA), let them know about your plans. The law says a HOA cannot prohibit you from installing a solar energy system or interfere with the full potential of energy generation. HOAs do have the right to ask that the system be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Sign contract with installer. An installer will help you apply for a building **permit** from the City or County which can take from three days to several weeks to be approved. You will also be required to sign an **interconnection agreement** from your local utility and apply for the **solar rebate**.
- The installation begins, which usually takes 2-3 days. Generally, the whole process will take 6 -10 weeks from the initial call to actual operation.
- When the installation is finished, the City or County and the utility company will send inspectors to insure safety. When both inspections are approved, the utility will provide the rebate which can take several weeks. Ask your installer if you can **defer payment** for the amount of your utility rebate. When the utility sends you the check, you then sign it over to the installer. This means less cash up front on your part.

3. Tax Credits and Utility Rebates

Tax credits for solar electric systems and solar hot water heaters apply to the year that the system actually goes into operation.

- Residential

- i. Federal tax credits are available for 30% off the cost of the system up to \$2,000. When filing your taxes, use federal tax form 5695. These tax credits apply to systems installed in 2006-2008 and may be used again in later years if more solar panels or hot water heaters are installed. For more information, visit: http://dsireusa.org/library/includes/incentive2.cfm?Incentive_Code=US37F&State=federal¤tpageid=1&ee=1&re=1.
 - ii. State tax credits are available for 25% off the cost of the system up to \$1,000. When filing taxes, use Arizona form 310. This credit may be used only once per residence. For more information, visit: http://dsireusa.org/library/includes/incentive2.cfm?Incentive_Code=AZ01F&state=AZ&CurrentPageID=1&RE=1&EE=1.
- Commercial
 - i. Tax credits are available for 30% off the cost of the system with no cap. For more information, visit: http://dsireusa.org/library/includes/incentive2.cfm?Incentive_Code=US02F&State=federal¤tpageid=1&ee=1&re=1.
- Utility Rebates

An even larger percentage reduction in the cost of a solar system comes from the utility rebate. Whereas the federal and state tax credits have caps, the utility rebate increases proportionally with the size of the system. The Arizona Corporation Commission has approved rules for net metering, which means that you will be able to receive credit at the end of the year for any excess power that you have added to the grid.

- i. Tucson Electric Power will give you \$3,000 per kilowatt and offers net metering. Ask your installer about rebates for solar hot water (including possible retroactive rebates). For more information: <http://www.tucsonelectric.com/Community/Environment/>.
 - ii. Trico Electric Cooperative will give you \$4,000 per kilowatt of solar electric, up to 50% of the cost of the system. For solar hot water, Trico will rebate 50 cents for each kilowatt-hour saved during the first year. For more information: http://www.trico.coop/sunwatts_information.html.
 - iii. Sulphur Springs Valley Electric Cooperative will give you \$4,000 per kilowatt, up to \$8,000. For more information: <http://www.ssvvec.org/programs/energySunWatts.php>.
 - iv. Arizona Public Service will give you \$3,000 per kilowatt and offers net metering. For solar hot water, APS will rebate 50 cents for each kilowatt-hour saved during the first year, up to \$10,000. For more information: http://www.aps.com/main/green/choice/choice_2.html?source=hme.